

“Community Jeopardy” (1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1)

Ten year ago, Danny Villegas robbed a bank and was sentenced to 70 months in a federal penitentiary. Surprisingly, Villegas decided he liked prison life so much that he committed another crime, just so he could return! Villegas walked inside a Federal Credit Union in Florida and told the teller he was robbing her, adding, “You might as well call the police right now.” He then sat down on a couch in the lobby and waited for police to arrive. Villegas had worked as a roofer in Texas for five years, but had grown tired of the work. As an unemployed roofer, he decided he preferred prison over trying to find another job.¹

Perhaps many of us are more like Danny Villegas than we care to admit. Either consciously or subconsciously, we prefer to take the easy way out. Instead of working to bless God and others, we choose a selfish prison of our own making. Instead of giving God the worship that He alone deserves, we worship ourselves. Instead of serving others, we seek our own good. When this takes place there is community jeopardy.

In 1 Cor 10:14-11:1, Paul is going to conclude a three-chapter discussion on the freedom that God has given Christians. The passage falls into two major sections. In 10:14-22 there is a stern warning and in 10:23-11:1 there is empathic counsel on how to use our freedom to God’s glory, for the good of other people. Paul is going to tell us that *true freedom is putting God and others first*. Paul first supplements this idea with a warning.

1. Flee idolatry or fight God (10:14-22).² In this first section, Paul informs us that idolatry is sin because God is the only true God, and He is a jealous lover who will not share our affections with anyone or anything else. In 10:14, Paul begins with a straightforward command: **“Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.”** The word “therefore”³ concludes the previous discussion (8:1-10:13) and moves toward a conclusion. Interestingly, Paul calls his readers “my beloved,” even though they are practicing idolatry.⁴ Now I can think of a lot of names by which the Corinthians could be identified or described, but “beloved” is not one of them.⁵ Yet, Paul loves these saints (cf. 1:2). Thus, he wants to remind his readers how precious they are to him even when he speaks harshly to them.⁶

As a pastor, I occasionally feel at least a shred of guilt for preaching particularly challenging portions of God’s word. My weak and sinful flesh wants to cut people slack and be especially gracious. Even pastors want to be liked and to make people feel good about themselves. Unfortunately, the Bible doesn’t spin things like we do. Therefore, I have concluded that biblical honesty is the best policy. I once heard Pastor Mark Driscoll of Mars Hill Church in Ballard, WA say, “Soft preaching produces hard people and hard preaching produces soft people.” I like this! Therefore, the most loving thing that I can do is to affirm you in Christ, yet, drill us all between the eyes when necessary.⁷

The command in 10:14 is to “flee”⁸ idolatry (cf. 10:7). “Idolatry” in the Old Testament was the image and worship of pagan gods. Today, in the 21st century, we’re still idolaters, but we’re just more sophisticated idolaters.⁹ Our idols appear more innocent since they are people, possessions, work, and leisure. However, if anyone or anything besides God gets our best thoughts, feelings, and energy we’re idolaters.¹⁰ Let me ask you a few quick questions: Do you know sports or the entertainment industry better than your Bible? If so, you will accumulate endless knowledge that will amount to nothing in eternity. Do you spend more time in your hobby than you do serving Christ? If so, you will have to answer for why Christ and His church meant so little to you during your brief sojourn on earth. Do you spend more time surfing the web than you do with people? If so, you will have neglected eternal souls that you could have impacted. Are you so driven to succeed in your job that you don’t have time to stop and pray? If so, you will never be satisfied. Are you bent on making just a little more money for yourself and your family? “If you make money your god, it will plague you like the devil.”¹¹

In 10:15, Paul writes, **“I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say.”** Verse 15 shows Paul’s approach to leadership. He was an apostle of Christ, yet he admonishes these sinful saints to judge his words for themselves (cf. 14:39-40).¹² If this was true 2,000 years ago in Corinth, this is certainly true for us as well. God has called you and me to study the Scriptures for ourselves.¹³ He expects that we will be wise and discerning because the Holy Spirit lives inside of those that have trusted in Christ.

In 10:16-22, Paul asks seven rhetorical questions in seven verses. As 10:15 indicated, Paul is inviting the Corinthians to carefully consider his words. First, Paul uses the Lord’s Supper and Israel’s sacrificial meals as an analogy to demonstrate that God’s people have always had one God. Second, he warns Israel against idolatry. In 10:16-18, Paul writes, **“Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?”** Paul informs us that any kind of idolatrous involvement contradicts our identity in Jesus Christ. Here, he shows how the communion table is a symbol of our relationship with Jesus Christ, who is the very source of our spiritual life. He is also the source of the unity that we have as brothers and sisters in His body. So when we partake together of the elements at the communion table, Paul says it involves a sharing (*koinonia*) with the Lord Jesus and also with our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. In 10:18, he furthers his analogy and says that the same dynamic was at work in ancient Israel as worshipers ate sacrificial meals in the temple in Jerusalem (see Deut 14:22-27). They communed with the Lord through the forgiveness associated with those animal sacrifices. So both believing Jews under the old covenant and followers of Jesus Christ under the new covenant are defined in terms of spiritual identity by what they eat together. And those meals aren’t just religious ritual...they are a picture of their relationship with the Lord of the universe. So symbolically, when we come to the Lord’s table, we are saying in essence, we eat this just as we live by it; Jesus is our source of life and strength. This sacred meal defines who we are in Jesus Christ. We have died to sin with Him, and we have been resurrected to new life because of His resurrection life.

The natural response to our oneness with Christ and each other should be to avoid idolatry at any cost. In 10:19-22, Paul explains that mixing drinks is of the devil! Paul writes, **“What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?”** In these verses, Paul is contrasting eating at the Lord’s table with eating meals in the pagan temples. It is a frightening reality that all idolatry is driven by demonic evil. The point Paul is making is that while the meat that was partaken of in these pagan sacrificial meals had no spiritual power, the meal did represent satanic evil. Demons are the spiritual force behind all idolatry, religious or otherwise. All idolatry, no matter how innocent we may think it is, is built on destructive lies about ultimate fulfillment and purpose in life. So Paul is warning these Christians that even unwitting involvement in pagan idolatry can draw a believer into participation with Satan and his demons.¹⁴

People say, “You are what you eat.” The Christian counterpart to that is, “You are what you believe.” Idolatry conflicts with our identity in Christ and so incurs the wrath of God. We live out our identity in Christ, so if we identify with something other than Him, then we will live that kind of life. The Christian life and the life of demons are mutually exclusive. No Christian can participate in demon activity with impunity. Christianity cannot be a mere religious hobby to us. No Christian can dip his flag or lower his colors by accommodating what he believes to another religion.¹⁵ Christians are all one big loaf of bread in unity with the Lord Jesus. We cannot inject other religious beliefs into that relationship.¹⁶ Compromise of truth and credence to other religions always weakens our faith. If we compromise truth, we had better check our insurance policy to see if it is up to date.¹⁷

The final verse in this section (10:22) is particularly interesting. Again, Paul writes, **“Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?”** In the Old Testament, the metaphor of marriage was often used to describe the Israelites’ relationship with the Lord in the context of their flirting with idols.¹⁸ Idolatry was equivalent to the Israelites’ prostituting themselves to another, foreign lover,¹⁹ and as a result the Lord became jealous.²⁰ This is to be expected. If your spouse said he or she had another love interest, your nostrils would flare, you would see red, and you would pour out your wrath. Similarly, any form of idolatrous involvement provokes the jealousy of God. All through the Old Testament, God identifies Himself as a “jealous God.”²¹ But His jealousy is not like ours. It’s totally consistent with His character. It’s also totally committed to what’s best for us. God’s jealousy comes from His loving ownership of us. He loves us too much for us to get away with whatever rebellion or idolatry we’re pursuing. He will intervene; He will crash into our life and it will be painful.²² He will do whatever it takes to get our attention, because the answer to the question is, we are *not* stronger than He is. No matter what the rebellion is or how entrenched it is, He is more powerful!

It goes without saying that this has not been a very tolerant sermon, but I don’t care to arouse God’s jealousy. The jealousy *of* God requires us to be zealous *for* God. The words translated “jealous” and “zealous” are the same in both the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament. The person who is jealous should also be zealous for the object of his love. You and I should be righteously zealous for God’s name and reputation.

You and I should be zealous for God’s people—both those who are already His and those who are not yet in the family. When Paul was preparing to establish the church at Corinth God gave him a very encouraging word: “I have many people in this city” (Acts 18:10). Well, there weren’t any Christians there yet. What God meant is that there were many who were destined to *become* Christians, but they needed to be evangelized. Do we have a passion for souls? Do we have a passion for making disciples? Do we have a zeal for serving God’s people? *True freedom is putting God and others first.*

Then, too, you and I should be zealous for God’s house, which in the New Testament is His church. Do you remember what Jesus said, “Zeal for Your house will consume me?” (John 2:17; cf. Ps 69:9) How do you rate in this area? In every church there are those whose zeal has waned and even evaporated. For many American Christians it might well be said, “Zeal for my job has consumed me,” or “Zeal for sports has consumed me,” or “Zeal for my family has consumed me,” rather than zeal for God’s house. May we focus our zeal on that which will last for eternity, when the rest of these things are burnt up on Judgment Day.²³ *True freedom is putting God and others first.*

[Paul has warned us to flee idolatry or fight God. Now he will encourage us to...]

2. Sacrifice for others or dishonor God (10:23-11:1). In this second section, Paul discusses how we should interact with others over issues of freedom.²⁴ His counsel is: Be willing to relinquish your “rights” for the sake of your brothers and sisters.²⁵ In 10:23, Paul shares an important principle: Edification is more important than our personal gratification. Paul writes, **“All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify.”** As Christians we really do have essential freedom in matters of morally neutral things. But our behavior must be tempered with concern for others in the body of Christ. If our freedom is going to be expressed through Christian maturity, it’s going to be concerned with the spiritual benefit to others. That word “edify” means to build up or strengthen. It’s a word from the vocabulary of the construction of buildings. Paul uses it in his letters to describe the strengthening of Christian character in ourselves and other people.²⁶ So when we’re faced with a decision about a particular practice, first we’ve got to ask ourselves if we have the right to do it. I would say if it’s not forbidden by Scripture, absolutely we have the right. But the next question has to be whether it’s profitable and edifying. Will this activity build people up, both ourselves and others? And again, if the answer is yes, then we can participate with full abandon.

A second principle is found in 10:24. Our freedom is going to express itself in serving other people. **“Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor.”** Paul is saying: Our thoughts should always be directed to other brothers and sisters in Christ. We should desire to sacrifice for others. Now, granted, there are two extremes when it comes to the issue of freedom: Some say, “I don’t care one iota what anyone says about what I do; I’ll do as I please. I operate on the principle of grace and am free to do as I please.” This attitude approaches spiritual anarchy. There are others who live in a spiritual straight jacket. They are afraid to sneeze without a sense of guilt. There must always be a delicate balance.²⁷ But if you’re going to err, err on the side of putting your spiritual family members first.²⁸

On a flight from Atlanta to Chicago in July 2004, nine U.S. soldiers—home from Iraq on a two-week leave—were among the passengers. Before one of the soldiers boarded, a passenger traded his first-class ticket for the soldier’s coach ticket. As the plane was boarding, other passengers asked to trade their first-class seats for the coach seats occupied by the remaining soldiers. Devilla Evans, a flight attendant on the American Airlines flight, said, “It was a privilege to be flying with those two groups of unselfish people: those who would put their lives on the line to protect their fellow citizens’ freedom, and those who were not ashamed to say thank you.”²⁹ *True freedom is putting God and others first.*

In 10:25-27, Paul will tell us that liberty in Christ will always triumph over legalism. In 10:25-26, Paul writes, **“Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience’ sake; for the earth is the Lord’s, and all it contains.”**³⁰ In these three verses, Paul majors on our freedom in Christ. He says it doesn’t matter what we eat, including food offered to idols, because neither the taking of it nor the abstaining from it will have any effect on our relationship with God. All food is a gift from God. So Paul says to enjoy life, to not be overly scrupulous. In this context, the old saying, “What you don’t know can’t hurt you” is true.

In 10:27, Paul explains how Christians should behave when invited to a unbeliever’s home: **“If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience’ sake.”** This verse is one of the favorite verses of mothers all over the world. Now if only children and husbands would abide by this principle☺. Seriously, in context, Paul informs the Corinthians that they should not make an issue of the origin of the meat or food they are eating. They should eat *all of it*. Eating a piece of meat that was offered to an idol will not defile the Christian. What defiles the Christian is participating in heathen worship. If eating a piece of idol-meat does not defile the Christian, there is no need to make an issue of it. This simply exercises an overly-sensitive conscience and introduces an unnecessary affront to the hospitality of the host. Paul implies that living out this freedom means that we’re going to have evangelistic entrée into people’s lives. There are nonbelievers who will invite us into their homes,³¹ and we have complete freedom to eat with them, whatever they put before us. Paul’s solution to a potential violation of conscience is “Don’t ask!” To the extent that we’re willing to do that, we’re reflecting the life of Jesus, who ate with tax-gatherers and sinners (Matt 9:10-11). But if we are legalistic, uptight, self-righteous, self-protective Christians, “holier than thou” types, our non-Christian acquaintances won’t want anything to do with us anyway. We’re not even going to get invited to their homes. But if we live a life of freedom and openness, that will attract them to Jesus.

In 10:28-30, Paul raises another challenging scenario: **“But if anyone says to you, ‘This is meat sacrificed to idols,’ do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience’ sake; I mean not your own conscience, but the other man’s; for why is my freedom judged by another’s conscience? If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered³² concerning that for which I give thanks?”** What Paul is doing in 10:28-29a is raising a hypothetical situation in which you’ve been invited to a non-Christian friend’s home, and one of your Christian friends is there as well who has a weaker conscience. And they are offended or confused by the freedom with which you’re indulging: “Didn’t you know this is idol food? Are you sure you ought to be eating this?” Paul suggests that we might decide to refrain from eating the meat so as not to risk leading that younger brother or sister in Christ into sin or

confusing their conscience.³³ But Paul makes clear that even though we may choose to modify our actions for the good of the weaker brother or sister, we are not to adjust our own conscience. Their weakness ought to make us very gracious, merciful, and sensitive toward them. But the legalism of the weaker one shouldn't make us feel condemned or influence us toward legalism in our own lifestyle. In 10:29b Paul again defends his freedom to partake of any kind of food, especially food that he knows is a good gift from God, and receive it with gratitude. He also says he refuses to be fearful about what other people think of him. He's not going to be controlled by that.

Paul is now ready to summarize this entire three-chapter unit (chs. 8-10). Paul's use of the word "then" (*oun*) in 10:31 is intended to draw his discussion on the food issue to a conclusion. As a general principle, believers should do everything "for the glory of God"—and Paul particularly mentions here (understandably) eating and drinking. To do something for the glory of God means to reflect God's glory in the way we live. Verses 31-32 again talk about the purpose of our freedom in Christ. **"Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.³⁴ Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God."** The aim we ought to have in using our liberty carefully and selflessly is to glorify God. These two verses wrap up everything we've been looking at in the preceding verses. We're to use our eating and drinking to bring glory to God, not to cause conflict, to honor a demon, or to undermine the faith of weaker brothers and sisters. Paul's desire was to live out his freedom in Christ, partly because of its evangelistic potential for the sake of the Gentiles and the Jews who didn't yet know Christ, and partly so he could have an influence on the church of Jesus Christ as an apostle. His concern was having an attractively inoffensive lifestyle of freedom. Paul spoke earlier in the letter about the fact that the gospel in and of itself is offensive to some people (1:18, 23). But he didn't want his own life to bring offense to the gospel in the eyes of anybody, Christian or non-Christian. The real fear here was that legalism, being controlling, would somehow be the offense that would keep people from the Lord Jesus. His desire was to try to live without offending in any direction, always thinking of both honoring Christ and affecting other people in how he lived. And Paul always looked in both of those directions. That's what Paul is talking about with regard to the purpose of our freedom in Jesus Christ.

Paul closes the section in the last two verses with an unsettling invitation. We could ask ourselves, "Could I issue the same invitation Paul does?" He says that his own life is a pattern of freedom in Jesus Christ, and he invites other people to imitate him. In 10:33-11:1, Paul writes: **"...just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ."**³⁵ Paul doesn't mean that he was a man-pleaser (cf. Gal 1:10). His concern was that his life would be attractive so that they would be drawn to Jesus in him. "Saved" in this context probably includes Christians and means saved in the wide sense of delivered from anything that keeps someone from advancing spiritually (cf. Rom 15:1-3).³⁶ Paul is not content simply to live his life as an example for the Corinthians to emulate; he actually instructs them to (lit.) become "imitators" of him. (cf. 4:16). For Paul, as an apostle of Christ, it wasn't just a matter of preaching and teaching. It was a matter of living out the truth that he taught. And in many of those cities Paul went to, he would be the first and only Christian they would see. So watching him live his life was very important for them to understand the reality of the gospel.

Paul is asking every one of us through this entire passage, "Do you want to know what it means to live a consistent Christian life? Do you want to properly balance freedom and restraint? Do you want to be in the world and not of the world? Do you want to have a positive spiritual influence in your community, but not allow that community to mold you so you compromise what's true and what's right? Do you want to live a balanced life, not being driven by the extremes of legalism or its opposite, selfish license? If you do, then watch me, follow me, live with me. I may not be perfect, but I try to imitate the selfless life that Christ lived. I want to glorify God in what I say and what I do and in the attitudes of my heart. To the extent that I succeed, then the good news is that you can, too."

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Scripture Reference

1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1

Exodus 20:3-5

Exodus 34:14

Joshua 24:14-24

Matthew 6:24

Revelation 3:15, 16, 19

Philippians 2:1-11

Study Questions

1. How am I presently guilty of idolatry (10:14)? How do I spend my time and money? Who or what receives the best of my thoughts, energies, and feelings? How can I “flee” this person, possession, or activity? What can I do to reprioritize Jesus Christ as my supreme affection? What will this practically look like?
2. In what ways are Christians unknowingly guilty of blending various world views with Christianity (10:22)? Why is this so attractive to both the world and the church? How can I stand strong and refuse to compromise the exclusive claims of Jesus Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Phil 2:9-11)? What are some approaches that I can use to be loving and gracious in my workplace, neighborhood, and family/friend network?
3. Are there any activities that I am biblically free to participate in that I may need to relinquish for the sake of my Christian brothers and sisters (10:23-24)? If so, do I love the body of Christ enough to surrender my rights? How can I balance sensitivity to fellow believers with the need to guard myself from legalistic Pharisees that intentionally or unintentionally turn Christianity into mere rules and regulations?
4. To what degree does my life glorify God in all that I do (10:31)? What one area of my life tarnishes God’s reputation and pleasure? Who can help me submit myself to the Lord and others?
5. Would I want people to “imitate” my life (11:1)? Why or why not? What one step can I take to be a more worthy example to my children, grandchildren, and fellow Christians? Is there a fellow believer that I respect and look up to? Have I told this man or woman how much I appreciate his or her walk with Christ? Have I sought out a mentor that will help me in my spiritual progress?

Notes

¹ Preaching Today citation: Hugh Poland, Kingwood, TX; source: Associated Press, “Police Say Man Staged Florida Robbery to Go Back to Prison,” *Houston Chronicle* (1-9-07). See also “Man Prefers Prison To Working” 1/8/2007: <http://www.northcountrygazette.org/articles/2007/010807PrefersPrison.html>.

² Garland writes, “In 10:14-17, Paul develops the theological significance of participating in the Lord’s Supper. In 10:18-20, he develops the theological significance of participation in pagan sacrificial meals. He draws the conclusion in 10:21-22 that participation in the Lord’s Supper bars participation in pagan sacrificial meals in any form believer should not fool themselves into thinking that they are strong enough to try to merge the two meals, to affiliate with Christ in demons. To attempt to do so only kindles the jealousy and judgment of God.” David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 473.

³ This word translated “therefore” (*dioper*) is only used one other place in the NT: 1 Cor 8:13. The term is only used in the LXX’s apocryphal books: Jdt 8:17; 2 Macc 5:20; 6:16, 27; 7:8; 14:19.

⁴ The term *agapetos* translated “my beloved” was used by God the Father of Jesus (e.g., Matt 3:17; 12:18; 17:5). Furthermore, many of the NT writers use this adjective in their letters to denote the followers of Jesus: e.g., the author of Hebrews (6:9); Peter (1 Pet 2:11); James (1:19); John (1 John 4:7); and Jude (Jude 3).

⁵ The term *agapetos* is used six times in the Corinthian correspondence: 1 Cor 4:14, 17; 10:14; 15:58; 2 Cor 7:1; and 12:19.

⁶ Paul’s Corinthian letters are his hardest words to churches; however, his words to the church at Galatia are rather severe as well (1:8-9; 5:4, 12).

⁷ David Busby said, “God loves us as we are, not as we should be, for we will never be as we should be.” Quoted in Rick Warren’s Ministry Toolbox #327, 9/7/2007.

⁸ Paul also uses the term “flee” (*pheugo*) in 1 Cor 6:18 (immorality); 1 Tim 6:11 (false doctrine, disputes, greed); and 2 Tim 2:22 (youthful lusts).

⁹ “Christianity can easily become a significant appendage, but not the core priority.” Dr. Bob Utley, “1-2 Corinthians”: <http://www.freebiblecommentary.org/pdf/VOL06.pdf>, 122.

¹⁰ As Jesus said, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt 6:21).

¹¹ A quote from Henry Fielding in Rick Warren’s Ministry Toolbox #327, 9/7/2007.

¹² Many scholars suggest that Paul is being sarcastic here (cf. 1 Cor 4:10). However, this is unlikely since he just addressed them as “my beloved” (10:14). Furthermore, the seven rhetorical questions that follow (10:16-22) suggest that Paul was confident his readers could think through his argument.

¹³ See Acts 17:11: “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.”

¹⁴ If we fellowship with the Lord Jesus, we cannot also have fellowship with the demonic, and vice versa. This is reminiscent of Jesus’ words in Matt 6:24, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

¹⁵ One remembers Elijah’s words to Israel 1 Kgs 18:21: “‘How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.’ But the people did not answer him a word.”

¹⁶ There are world religions that have been created to combine the table of the Lord and the table of demons. The best example is the Bahai religion, which tries to combine the best of all the world’s ideologies.

¹⁷ Grant Richison, “1 Corinthians”: <http://versebyversecommentary.com/2002/10/24/1-corinthians-1018-22/>.

¹⁸ Verlyn D. Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians” in the *Revised Expositors Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, forthcoming).

¹⁹ E.g., Lev 20:5; 2 Chron 21:11, 13; Ezek 16:15-41.

²⁰ E.g., Deut 32:16, 21; Josh 24:19-20; Ps 78:58-64; Ezek 8:3, 5; Zech 1:18.

²¹ Nahum 1:2 reads, “A jealous and avenging God is the LORD; the LORD is avenging and wrathful. The LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies.”

²² Proverbs 27:4 declares, “Wrath is fierce and anger is a flood, But who can stand before jealousy?”

²³ Michael P. Andrus, “The Danger of Mixed Drinks” (1 Cor 10:14-22): unpublished sermon notes.

²⁴ Viktor Frankl, “Freedom is only part of the story and half the truth.... That is why I recommend that the Statue of Liberty on the East Coast be supplemented by a Statue of Responsibility on the West Coast.” Viktor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (Touchstone Books, 1984); submitted by Kevin Miller, vice president, Christianity Today.

²⁵ G. K. Chesterton, “To have a right to do a thing is not at all the same as to be right in doing it.” G. K. Chesterton, *A Short History of England*, 1917 *Christian History* (Issue 75, Vol. 21, No. 3), 40.

²⁶ Verbrugge writes, “We should recall here that this is the word Paul used at the very beginning of this discussion in 8:1 when he stressed that the overriding principle for the Christian life is ‘love [that] builds up.’ This verb, therefore,

forms an envelope or inclusio around this entire section on whether one may eat meat in an idol temple or even elsewhere.” Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians.”

²⁷ Sometimes Christians must choose whether or not to participate in certain “questionable” practices. A questionable issue is a “gray area” of activity or a choice not directly addressed by the Bible as right or wrong. Good Christians can disagree about many gray areas: whether to use alcohol, tobacco, or caffeine; or what are appropriate movies, music, and magazines; or whether to participate in certain traditions surrounding Christmas, Easter, or Halloween; etc. Some resort to extremes to settle the issues. One extreme is license: If the Bible does not prohibit a practice then there is freedom under grace to participate. The other extreme is legalism: A judgmental certainty about these issues that demands total abstinence. Both extremes neglect critical examination of the issue and the biblical principles, and both short-circuit the maturing process (see Heb 5:13-14). The Bible gives us guidelines for making responsible decisions about questionable issues. Under grace we are free, but we should use our freedom to make good decisions. A good decision is one that pleases God and is beneficial to all. In short, a good decision is one that reflects love towards God and others (1 Cor 10:24).

²⁸ Phil 2:1-11 speaks of having the same spirit of willingness Jesus had: to live sacrificially, to give up for the sake of the other, to consider other people more important than I am in the body of Christ.

²⁹ Preaching Today citation: Headlines.agapepress.org (7-21-04); submitted by Greg Miller, Madison, Mississippi.

³⁰ Verse 26 includes a quote from Ps 24:1, which was used in Jewish society as a means of giving thanks before meals. David W.J. Gill, “1 Corinthians” in Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Biblical Background Commentary: Vol 3 Romans to Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 155.

³¹ The word used for “invites” (*kaleo*) is found in papyri from Egypt relating to both secular and religious meals. Gill, “1 Corinthians,” 155.

³² This is the only place in 1 and 2 Corinthians where “slandered” (*blasphemeo*) occurs. Paul is highlighting the tragedy of a believer being maligned by a ready-to-judge Christian.

³³ Paul is very clear in Romans 14 that if we cause somebody to violate their conscience, we’ve done them a horrible disservice in terms of their relationship with Christ.

³⁴ In 1 Cor 10:31, Paul uses the Greek word *eite* (“whether”) implying choice three times for emphasis.

³⁵ Chapter divisions in the Bible were added in 1205 by Stephen Langton, a professor in Paris (he later became Archbishop of Canterbury), who put these into a Vulgate edition of the Bible. It was Robert Stephanus, a Parisian book printer, who took over the verse divisions already indicated in the Hebrew Bible and assigned numbers to them within the chapter divisions already assigned by Stephan Langton. While riding on horseback from Paris to Lyons he affixed his own verse divisions to the NT and numbered them within Langton’s chapter divisions. Prior to that time when folks looked at Old and New Testament manuscripts, there were no divisions, just one continuous long epistle from beginning to end.

³⁶ Thomas L. Constable: *Notes on 1 Corinthians*: 2005 edition:
<http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/1corinthians.pdf>, 107-108.